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American School
of Classical Studies
at Athens

GEOMETRIC VASES FROM CORINTH¹

[PLATES XI-XVI]

DURING the recent excavations made at Corinth by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, one of the most interesting of the smaller finds was a group of geometric vases. They were found in two instalments, four² being unearthed on April 30, 1898; these, seemingly unimportant, claimed little attention as compared with the great discovery of the year—Peirene. But during the last days of the excavations of the following year, May 25 and 26, 1899, in the process of excavating more thoroughly the region where the first four were found, twelve³ more vases of the same period came to light. The entire group is of value, even should no more of the same class be found later in the process of excavating, since it adds one more to the carefully

¹ For the privilege of publishing these vases I am indebted to Professor Richardson, former Director of the American School at Athens. My thanks are due also to Mr. Herbert F. De Cou for helpful suggestions and for reading the manuscript. Mr. Sherwood O. Dickerman kindly made investigations and observations for me at Corinth and in the Museum of Eleusis, and supervised the photographing of the vases.

² These were as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. Large amphora (PLATE XI). | c. Small oinochoe (PLATE XII, A 3). |
| b. Large oinochoe (PLATE XII, A 2). | d. Cylix (PLATE XII, A 4). |

³ These were as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. Large oinochoe (PLATE XIII, B 1). | g. Cylix (PLATE XIV, B 7). |
| b. Large oinochoe (PLATE XIII, B 2). | h. Cylix (PLATE XVI, B 8). |
| c. Large oinochoe (PLATE XV). | i. Cylix (PLATE XVI, B 9). |
| d. Small oinochoe (PLATE XIV, B 4). | j. Support for vase (PLATE XV). |
| e. Cylix (PLATE XIV, B 5). | k. Handmade vase (PLATE XVI, B 11). |
| f. Cylix (PLATE XIV, B 6). | l. Handmade vase (PLATE XVI, B 12). |

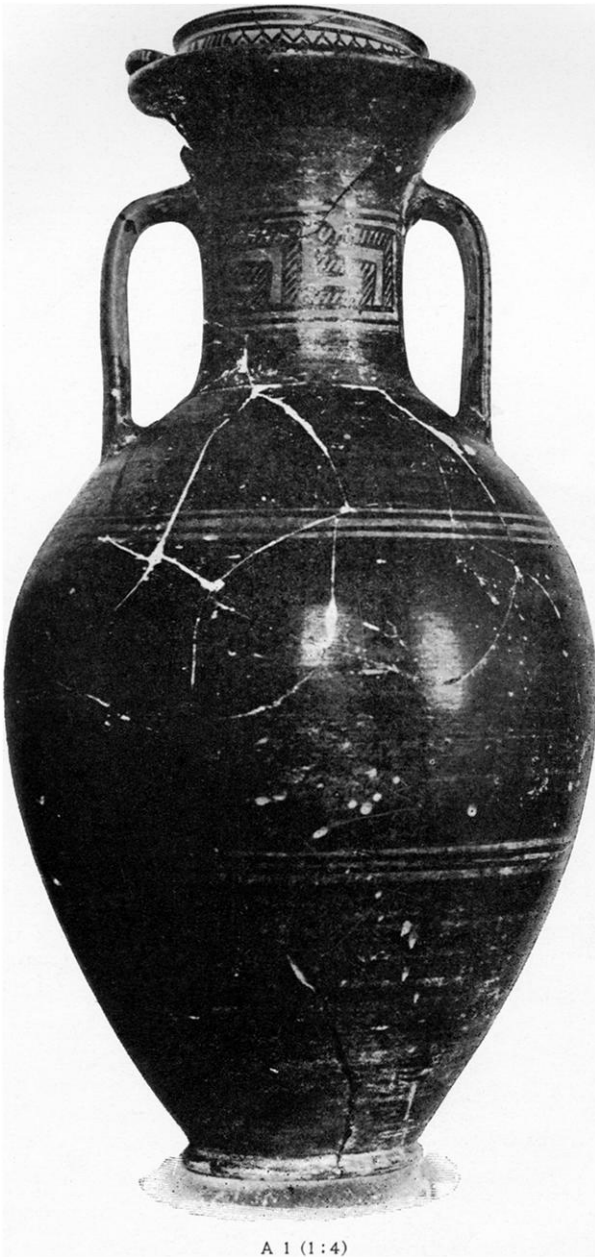
classified list, already published by Wide (*Jahrbuch d. kais. Deutsch. Arch. Inst.* XIV, 1899, pp. 26-43, 78-86, 188-215; and XV, 1900, pp. 49-58), of places where local styles of geometric pottery have been found to have existed.

This group of vases was found about 42 m. a little west of north from the centre of Peirene, and about 7 m. a little north of east from the paved road which led from the Agora to Lechaeum, near the north end of the steps leading up to the entrance to the Agora. Farther to the northeast, beyond the modern village square, lies a hill which, to quote from the Report of 1897, is "honey-combed with a burial-place of very ancient date." In these graves were found the pre-Mycenaean vases published in 1897.¹ Between the pre-Mycenaean burial-place and the site of the finding of our group, in trial Trench IV, not far to the southeast of the modern square, a pocket yielded a few geometric fragments. Close by the place where these vases of ours were found, were discovered the remains of the small Greek Temple; this could not have been standing in the day of Pausanias, as the back of the eastern portico along this road was built over a part of it.² The spot where the first instalment was found was near the embankment which marked the eastern limit of the excavation area of 1898, but which has since been dug away for some distance with no further yield in pottery in that direction. To the southwest, however, at the spot marked A in the photograph (Fig. 1), the second instalment appeared in 1899.

The large amphora (PLATE XI) was found standing upright, 4.50 m. from the surface of the earth, with the cylix (PLATE XII, A 4) on the top, apparently as a cover, as is shown in the photograph; near by were the fragments of the two oinochoae, since restored (PLATE XII, A 2, A 3); not far to the southwest of the amphora, on a level with its base, lay a stone plate,

¹ *A.J.A.* I (1897), p. 313, 'Pre-Mycenaean Graves in Corinth,' by T. W. Heermance and G. D. Lord.

² *A.J.A.* VI (1902), p. 441, 'Lechaeum Road at Corinth,' by J. M. Sears, Jr., and pl. xvii.



A 1 (1:4)

GEOMETRIC AMPHORA FROM CORINTH



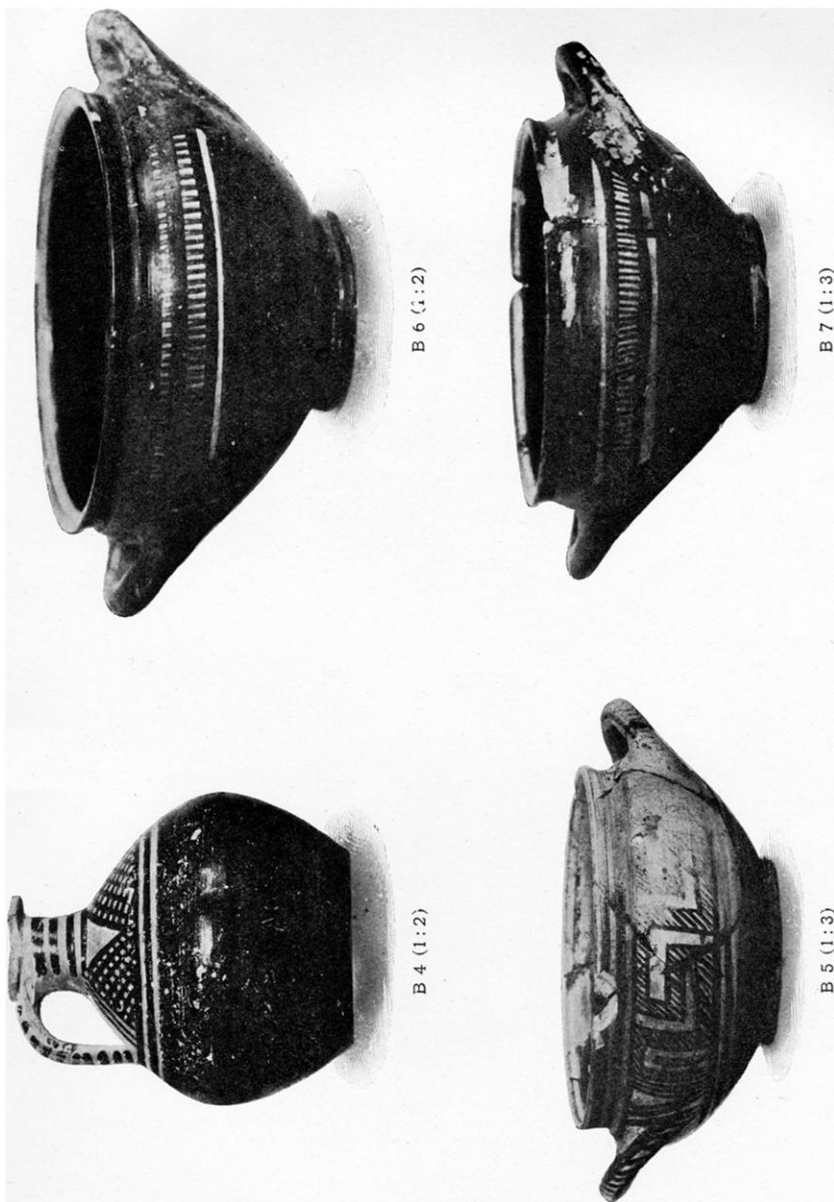
GEOMETRIC VASES FROM CORINTH: OINOCHOAE AND CYLIX



B 2 (1:3)

B (1:3)

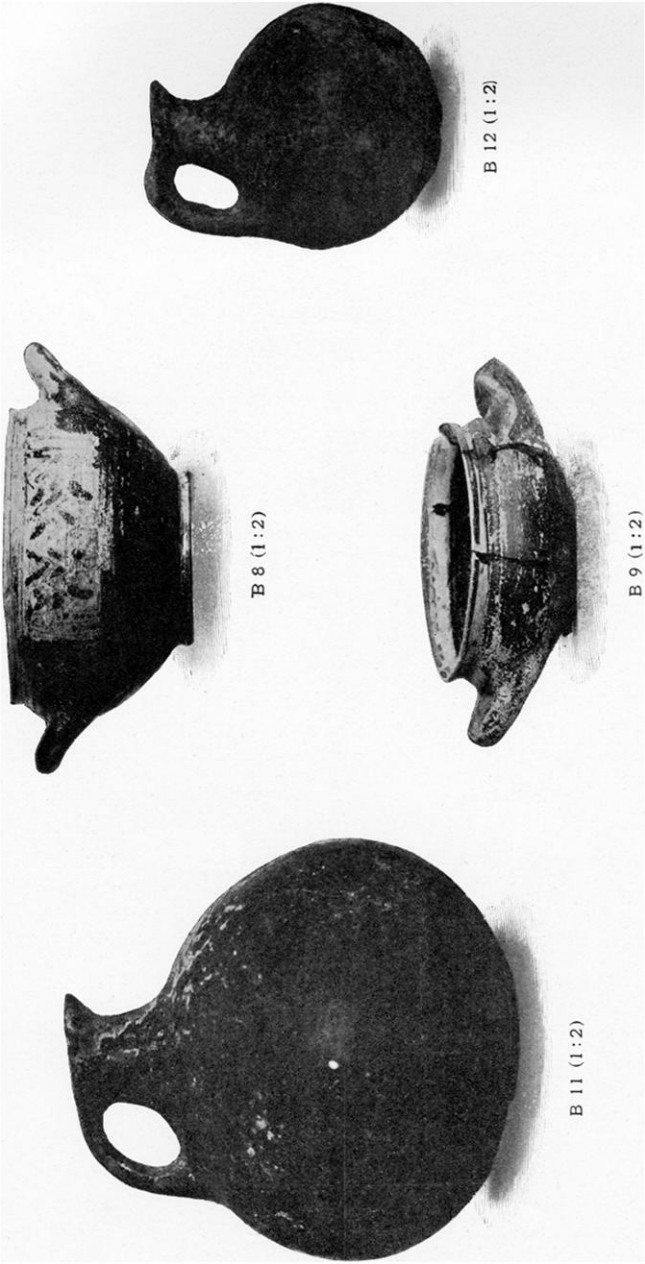
GEOMETRIC OINOCHOAE FROM CORINTH



GEOMETRIC VASES FROM CORINTH: OINOCHOAE AND CYLIXES



GEOMETRIC VASES FROM CORINTH: OINOCHOE AND STANDARD



GEOMETRIC VASES FROM CORINTH: OINOCHOAE AND CYLIXES

cracked in the middle and broken at one corner, which proved to be the cover of a roughly made sarcophagus, hewn from a single block of light-colored poros stone (cf. Fig. 1).¹ In this were a



FIGURE 1. — FINDING-PLACE OF A GROUP OF GEOMETRIC VASES, IN CORINTH.

few worthless sherds and some short, thick bones; only one of these was preserved, and it proved to be the tibia of a bovine.²

¹ The dimensions of this sarcophagus are as follows :

Length : outside, 1.70 m. ; inside, 1.47 m.

Width : outside, 0.87 m. ; inside, 0.61-0.65 m. ; the sides vary in thickness from 9.50-13 cm.

Depth on inside, 0.40 m. ; greatest height, 0.59 m.

The cutting of the stone is very irregular, and the marks of the tool are everywhere prominent. At the corners, at a distance of some 11 cm. from the top, the stone is cut under, giving the effect of a rim. This is true of all three of the corners, which are as yet accessible.

These details were obtained through the kindness of Mr. Sherwood O. Dickerman, who made a close examination of the spot in the summer of 1899.

² This statement is made on the authority of Dr. Grace Kimball of Vassar College.

In the same vicinity, a few days later, there were found vase fragments of all periods from the geometric to much later times.

Since then the foundations of the small Greek Temple have been uncovered to the east; it would seem that these might have been laid without disturbing this grave, as the top of the sarcophagus is only six inches higher than the bottom of the lowest layer, and 2.10 m. away from them. To the west was the high embankment, 4 m. wide, along which at that time the little excavation railroad ran, and beyond which, 1.30 m. above the top of the sarcophagus, lay the paved road.

The other twelve vases were discovered the following year to the southwest of the sarcophagus. There were said to be ashes and bones in the vicinity similar to those found in various parts of the excavations, but as yet nothing definite can be determined from the character of the soil here.

A detailed description of the vases of these two groups follows.

GROUP A

1. Amphora (PLATE XI).—Height, 0.55 m.; diameter of the mouth, 0.177 m.; greatest circumference, 0.93 m.; clay pinkish, decoration lustrous dark brown to black. Found intact, but broken in transportation. Fairly well preserved. Decoration worn off in places.

In shape and style it is similar to that found at Eleusis (*Eph. Arch.* 1898, 1, 2, pl. 3, fig. 5. For shape, compare also *Jahrbuch d. kais. Deutsch. Inst.* 1899, figs. 46 and 47, from Troezen), but it has a more flaring mouth and more bulging body. It was found with a cylix (PLATE XII, A 4) on top, as was the case also at Eleusis. The decoration is similar to that of Wide's Class I (*Jahrbuch*, 1900, p. 56). The body is covered with dark brown lustrous paint, which is almost black in places, with the exception of two parallel bands, left the color of the clay, on which are painted two dark brown lines, parallel, but very irregularly drawn. These lines vary in width from 0.002 to 0.005 m. One of the bands is 0.16 m. from the base, the other is 0.32 m. The neck has a panel on each side, left the color of the clay and decorated with a rudely executed, primitive meander. The handles are decorated with horizontal lines drawn across between verticals along the edges. The inside of the amphora is painted for about 0.02 m. on the edge of the mouth.

There is a large red spot on one side, probably due to a fault in the firing (cf. Furtwängler, *Vasensammlung zu Berlin*, no. 56). The discoloration on

the other side in two circles seems to be due to a different cause, possibly to some chemical action of the soil with which it came in contact.

2. Large Oinochoe (PLATE XII).— Height, 0.30 m.; greatest circumference, 0.74 m.; diameter of base, 0.108 m. Clay pale greenish gray. Decoration in greenish black, worn off in most parts. Found in fragments. Parts of lip, neck, body, and base are lacking. Decoration is similar to that of A 1, but with some differences. The body has only one band, near the shoulder, the lines being 0.002 to 0.003 m. wide. The neck panel is decorated with a quadruple zigzag, between two parallels above and below. The handles are as in A 1. All the drawing is more carefully executed than in A 1. There is no paint on the inside.

3. Small Oinochoe (PLATE XII).— Height, 0.125 m.; greatest circumference, 0.295 m.; diameter of base, 0.055 m. Clay pale gray, slightly pinkish, and finer than No. 2. Decoration in brownish black, badly worn for the most part. Found in fragments; parts of lip, body, and neck still lacking. Body decorated as in 2, lines being 0.001 m. wide, and regularly drawn. Neck panel is decorated with close zigzag, between two parallel lines below and three above. Lines on handle are oblique, instead of horizontal, and there are no lines on the edges. Inside is without paint. The shape is better than that of 2, neck longer and more slender, the proportions finer.

4. Cylix (PLATE XII).— Height, 0.068 m.; diameter of mouth, 0.128 m. to 0.13 m.; diameter of base, 0.066 m. Clay pinkish, more so than 3, less so than 1, and fine. Paint is less lustrous than in 3, and varies from a light to a dark reddish brown, according to the thickness with which it was put on; it is well preserved. Found slightly broken on top of A 1; one handle and large part of one side are lacking. Decoration consists of a triple zigzag on each shoulder between the handles, with parallels above and below, with which the points of the zigzags are connected by short vertical lines. Lower part of body is painted, and edge of mouth is painted with a line; the inside is painted, except a narrow line at top, about 0.002 m. wide. Handle is decorated, as in fragment of another cylix shown in Fig. 2, with verticals between horizontals.

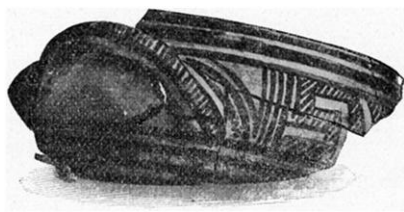


FIGURE 2.— FRAGMENT OF A GEOMETRIC CYLIX FROM CORINTH. (1:3.)

GROUP B

1. Oinochoe (PLATE XIII).— Height, 0.335 m.; circumference of body, 0.841 m.; diameter of base, 0.113 m. Clay brownish, with slightly pinkish cast. Found in many fragments. Decoration similar to that of A 2, but with three bands instead of one on the body, and on the neck panel a triple

zigzag between two parallels above and below. The decoration is well preserved only in a circular spot on one side of the vase.

2. Oinochoe (PLATE XIII).—Height, 0.322 m.; greatest circumference, 0.73 m.; diameter of base, 0.096 m. Clay creamy yellow, slightly pinkish in breaks, coarser than in A 2. Vase broken in process of excavating, but restored. Decoration in a dark chocolate brown, for the most part well preserved. On one side is a red spot, as in A 1, due to carelessness in firing, but less prominent. The design of the decoration is like that of A 2, except that the band on the shoulder is decorated with three lines instead of two, and the zigzag on the neck panel is five-fold instead of quadruple.

The shape of the body is not perfect in its lines; it seems to be flattened in parts as if pressed out of shape in the process of making when the clay was soft.

3. Oinochoe (PLATE XV, above).—Height, 0.29 m.; greatest circumference, 0.615 m.; diameter of base, 0.136 m. Clay pale greenish gray, slightly coarser than in A 2. Decoration in dark brown, not well preserved.

Design of decoration on body of vase similar to that of B 1, consisting of three bands. The design on the neck panel, which is rather small, is a sort of meander with irregular hatching. The same design is found on a vase in Herakleion, from Anopolis (*Jahrbuch*, 1899, fig. 20, p. 38). Wide calls it a development of the Mycenaean wave pattern. The design on the handle is a double St. Andrew's cross.

In shape this oinochoe differs from all the others found at Corinth, being less graceful in its proportions and curves; yet it compares favorably in this respect with some of those found at Eleusis (cf. Museum at Eleusis, No. 696 and 898).

4. Oinochoe (PLATE XIV).—Height, 0.087 m.; diameter of base, 0.048 m. Clay pinkish gray. Found intact, except a part of lip and base. Base very slightly concave and without a foot. Body of vase up to 0.01 m. of handle was painted a dark brownish black; then two parallel lines, above which is the chief design, consisting of a triangular cross-hatched decoration; on the right of the handle this is bordered by two lines parallel to the side of the triangle nearest the handle, but on the left side, owing to lack of space, there is only half a triangle and one parallel line; in all there are four and one-half triangles. The neck is decorated with four parallel horizontal lines; the handle also has parallel horizontals. In Eleusis there is a vase (Museum, No. 970) which closely resembles this, with the addition of water-birds in the design on the neck panel. The closest parallel, so far as I know, is in Berlin (Museum for Völkerkunde, Schliemannsammlung, No. 8767), published by Wide in *Jahrbuch*, 1900, fig. 112 (cf. also fig. 111, and for shape of the body, *Jahrbuch*, 1899, p. 42, fig. 29).

5. Cylix (PLATE XIV).—Height, 0.072 m.; diameter of mouth, 0.13 m. to 0.138 m.; diameter of base, 0.071 m. Clay greenish gray. Paint brownish black, well preserved on one half of the vase, very poorly on the other

half. Found in fragments; part of rim, small piece of side, and part of base lacking.

Decoration similar to that of A 4, but with meander on the shoulder panel instead of the zigzags. The meander is similar to that in A 1, and in a fragment shown in Fig. 2.

6. Cylix (PLATE XIV). — Height, 0.07 m.; diameter of mouth, 0.115 m. to 0.117 m.; diameter of base, 0.053 m. Clay pinkish. Vase found intact. Paint varies in color from bright red to brownish black, according to thickness with which it was put on. Inside painted, except line near lip 0.002 m. wide. The under side of the handles and part of shoulder under handle not painted. The decoration is on a narrow panel on each side of the shoulder between the handles. On the panel were drawn two horizontal parallel lines, and across the two upper spaces vertical lines were drawn up and down (cf. *Athen. Mitth.* 1903, 'Der archaische Friedhof am Stadtberge von Thera,' by Ernst Pfuhl, Beilage xxxiii, 4, 6).

7. Cylix (PLATE XIV). — Height, 0.059 m.; diameter of mouth, 0.10 m.; diameter of base, 0.048 m. Found in fragments. Clay pinkish.

Decoration same as in B 6, except that the verticals cross the middle space of the panel only. Lines irregularly drawn.

8. Cylix (PLATE XVI). — Height, 0.048 m.; diameter of mouth, 0.075 m. to 0.077 m.; diameter of base, 0.042 m. Clay pale. Painted inside and outside with a very lustrous jet black paint, which scales off easily. Found intact.

Decoration is on a panel on each side of the shoulder between the handles, and consists of a triple zigzag, finished at each side with two verticals. The under side of the handles and the shoulder under the handles not painted.

9. Cylix (PLATE XVI). — Height, 0.032 m.; diameter of mouth, 0.070 m.; diameter of base, 0.035 m. Clay greenish gray. Found in fragments. Entire vase painted a light chocolate brown, except a narrow line at the top. The inside of lip not painted for a distance of 0.005 m., this space being decorated with vertical lines in groups, two of the four groups consisting of eleven lines, the other two being too indistinct to be counted. Inside of vase painted. Paint not well preserved.

Compare Eleusis Museum, No. 968, for a similar design on the lip of a cylix, and also a fragment found at Corinth, and shown in Fig. 3.

10. Support for Vase (PLATE XV, below). — Height, 0.118 m.; diameter of larger end, 0.175 m. to 0.182 m.; diameter of smaller end, 0.17 m. to 0.172 m.;

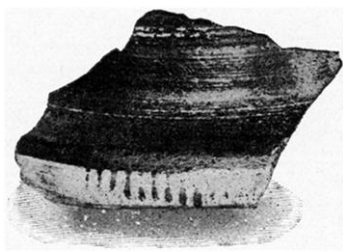


FIGURE 3. — FRAGMENT OF A GEOMETRIC CYLIX FROM CORINTH. (1:3.)

diameter of middle, 0.085 m.; smallest circumference, 0.30 m. Found intact, supporting an oinochoe, probably B 3, as shown in the photograph, since that is the one which best fits it. Clay pale yellowish. Color dark brown, fairly well preserved, except in one part; the worn part corresponds to that of the oinochoe, and would seem to be due to the same cause. The only decoration is the band around the middle, which was unpainted except with the usual two horizontal and parallel lines. The handle has horizontals also.

11. Handmade Vase (PLATE XVI).—Height, 0.11 m.; circumference, 0.327 m.; circumference of neck, 0.072 m.; width of mouth, 0.03 m. Clay buff. Handmade, better polished than 12, and not as spherical. Base slightly flattened. Neck not in vertical line with axis, and the mouth tips up. Found intact. No ornamentation.

12. Handmade Vase (PLATE XVI).—Height, 0.065 m.; circumference, 0.183 m.; circumference of neck, 0.055 m.; width of mouth, 0.023 m. Clay pale buff, not well cleansed. Handmade, no base, handle very thick, neck not well defined. No ornamentation. Found intact.

This and B 11 resemble primitive ware, but may have been poor work of any period. Handmade vases similar to these were found at Eleusis with the geometric ware (*Eph. Arch.* 1898, 1, 2, p. 102, fig. 25), and also in Dipylon graves, with geometric pottery.

The general characteristics of these vases may be thus summed up: The clay is either gray or pink, the gray being sometimes a greenish gray, often pinkish in places, due to the firing, and sometimes having a creamy tint, as in B 2, where it is a rich yellow; the pink varies from a very light to a very deep pink or red, as in the amphora (A 1). The fineness of the clay also varies. A careful comparison of these vases with the fragments of Corinthian vases found near the Temple of Apollo, reveals the same two general classes in both, which would seem to indicate that these early vases were a local product. This view seems to be confirmed by the results of the examination of the Eleusis vases with reference to this point, for in those vases there is an absence of the so-called "pepper" which characterizes so much of the clay in the vases at Corinth, and also of the creamy tint not uncommon here.

The lustrous paint used in the decoration varies from a light reddish brown through a dark brown and brownish black to black; in one it is greenish black (A 2), while in another (B 2) it is a rich chocolate brown. In many cases the paint is poorly

preserved, the least durable being the greenish black. The chocolate brown is perhaps the best preserved of all.

The most common shapes are the *cylix*, and the *oinochoe* with spherical body, short neck, and trefoil mouth; B 7 has a much longer neck and a more oval body, with the sides growing nearly straight toward the base. In B 4 the upper and lower convex surfaces of its body meet at an obtuse angle, instead of forming one continuous curve. One amphora only was found, which in shape differs somewhat from any that I have seen elsewhere; it has a slender oval body, long neck, and broadly flaring mouth, extending somewhat high above the handles.

No other example exists, so far as I know, of a support similar to that found at Corinth (B 10). It resembles a huge napkin-ring, with a deeply concave surface, the diameter at the base being greater than at the top; it has a handle on one side. Its use as a support is suggested by the circumstance of its being found supporting an *oinochoe*. The two handmade vases need no further comment.

The style of decoration in all the vases is extremely simple; in general, with the exception of the *cylixes*, the body of the vase has a simple band decoration, the rest being painted solid; the neck has a panel left for the decoration, which may consist of zigzags—whether single, triple, quadruple, or fivefold—or of some form of the meander. The handle is usually decorated with horizontals between uprights; B 3 has horizontals above and below a double St. Andrew's cross. The smallest pitcher, B 4, has cross-hatched triangles on the shoulder, and one fragment of an amphora has dots on the lip (Fig. 4).

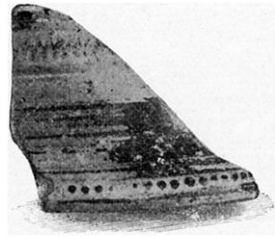


FIGURE 4. — FRAGMENT OF
A GEOMETRIC AMPHORA
FROM CORINTH. (1:3.)

The *cylixes* show the same characteristics, having on the shoulder panel, as decoration, the meander, zigzags, or verticals, crossing parallel rings, or between two of them; the handles have parallel verticals between horizontals; the lip of one has

verticals in groups. In all these vases the decoration is the simplest form of geometric ornament.

Vases similar to these have been found in graves near the so-called "Theseum" and the Areopagus in Athens, in Eleusis, and in the excavations at the Argive Heraeum. The resemblance to those found at Eleusis is most striking; there is the same style of ornament, though a greater variety and wealth of design is seen in those found at Eleusis, and therefore a greater lack of solid color on the surface. Yet there are many in which the decoration is very similar. The same is true of the shapes which occur there; the cylix is common; the amphora, similar to that found at Corinth, though with less flaring mouth and more bulging body, also occurs; and at least two were found with a cylix on top in the same manner as here. Pitchers like B 3 and 4 occur, but none with the spherical body. The clay, as I have said, differs somewhat, and there is none of the chocolate brown color used in the decoration. Therefore while the similarity would be quite enough to place them in the same class and in the same period, yet there are sufficient points of difference, I think, to preclude the supposition of a common manufactory.

Those found at Athens show a preponderance of the same shapes, amphora, cylix, and oinochoe, but with a richer variety of ornament, although they still lack the wealth of ornamentation found on the so-called Dipylon ware.

The date of this class of vases may be determined with some degree of exactness. At Eleusis there were found three layers of geometric graves, and in none of them were there any of the funeral vases of the Dipylon style; the foot of one was found in the uppermost layer, and three small fragments, but in the lowest layer there was absolutely no trace of such vases. From this fact, and from the character of the graves at Athens which contained vases of this style, they may be dated without question as prior to the Dipylon as we have known it. But it is possible to date them with even more exactness. These vases from Corinth resemble most closely those found in the lowest

geometric layer at Eleusis; just under that layer appeared Mycenaean fragments; the remains of walls show that the site was not long unoccupied during the interval; therefore these vases must belong to the period immediately succeeding the Mycenaean, that is to say, about the tenth century B.C.

The finding of these very early geometric vases at Corinth, then, seems to be one more link in the chain of evidence in favor of the spread of the Dorian influence along the Isthmus into Attica. It seems quite possible that this grave is but the beginning of a geometric necropolis such as was found at Eleusis, and it would be interesting, were it possible to do so without injury to remains of later date, to carry the investigation of this region farther. Again, since it has been proved that *stereo* was not reached in the excavation of this spot, it would seem worth while to make trial at Corinth to see if below the geometric civilization may not lie buried remains of the Mycenaean, as at Eleusis, thus establishing here also the same relationship between the two. As yet nothing Mycenaean has been found at Corinth, and such evidence would prove of great value in the study of the early history of Greece.

M. LOUISE NICHOLS.

FARMINGTON, CONNECTICUT,
October, 1904.